



Press release 3

Background: *Why did you apply for this project? What were the needs you have addressed?*

The WINnovators project asserted that HEIs should play as catalysts of change within the territories where they are located, contributing proactively to shaping socioeconomic development processes. Project focused on the needs: i) for promoting competencies of young women from rural areas who lack mentors and partners with whom develop further their own innovative business approaches. ii) developing and testing out in HEIs new capacity building directed teaching and learning approaches that advance shared capacity across universities and regional ecosystems and, iii) blending students as change agents and young women who have fewer opportunities towards innovative careers to make them agentic. Project aimed to reconfigure teaching and learning practices in HEIs towards capacity development approaches that involve Open Innovation Ecosystems (OIE), communities and informal learners into teamwork practices, to transform young women's careers towards digital, STEM/STEAM innovation, entrepreneurship and sustainability.

Two Pilots took place between the HEIs in Estonia, Serbia and Slovenia, young women from the countryside regions in these countries and the Youth work centres in Estonia, business incubators Association of Serbian Business Women, and the Employment Service and the Chamber of Commerce and Agriculture of Slovenia engaging.

Objectives: *What did you want to achieve by implementing the project?*

WINnovators' intended to co-develop and implement in cooperation with the HEIs and the regional Innovation Ecosystems the innovative teaching and learning approaches and concrete policies for capacity development in the digital, entrepreneurial, STEM/STEAM innovation and sustainability fields, from which young women from rural areas and HEI students and educators would mutually benefit in the short and long run.

i) WINnovators aimed to develop and test out a set of capacity building practices - the WINnovators Training practices Collection (PR1), that comprised two training modules, one targeting HEI students and young rural women, and the second educators and policymakers.

ii) Develop the competencies of young women in rural communities, and the capacity of HEI students and educators to act as change agents through the development of the gamified eTrainings and e-Modules that promote innovation-led collaboration (PR1, PR2, PR4).

iii) Build a WINnovators Community as a shared capacity mediated by the WINnovators Interactive Working Space (PR3) for teamwork in trainings

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iv) Involve policymakers from all partners' countries to seminars, to contribute to WINnovators' policy guidelines (PR4), that raises awareness of Winnovators' practices.

Implementation: *What activities did you implement in your project?*

i) codevelopment the capacity building Training practises across HEIs, communities and OIEs.

We engaged all partners to codevelop the capacity building Training practises across HEIs, communities and OIEs. We specified the engagement and training principles with HEI students and young rural women and regional business ecosystem partners in Estonia, Serbia and Slovenia, established the evaluation principles for the Pilots, specified the set of integrated Winnovators' competences, and described the Winnovators self learning and group challenges components (D.1.1).

ii) codevelopment of the Winnovators eTraining modules 1 and 2 in Winnovators working space

The elearning Modules 1 and 2 were developed in teamwork into the Winnovator space (D.1.2) and connected with open learning badges associated with Winnovators' competencies framework (D.2.1). Winnovator Space contains the validated elearning materials of the Winnovators e-Modules 1 and 2. Module 1 comprises different sets of self-learning lessons and challenge lessons in different national languages in Estonian, Slovenian, Serbian and English, because the teams tested out specific topics to support the progress in their countries. e-Module 2 was developed based on project experiences and it presents best practices for capacity building and the illustrated cases from the Pilots. e-Module 2 was developed in all piloting partners' languages (Estonian, Slovenian, Serbian, Romanian, Italian) and in English to conduct eTrainings for educators and policymakers for international audiences (D. 4.2).

iii) codevelopment and evaluation of the Winnovators working space for cross HEI and communities learning, with gamified open badges approach

The WINnovators Space <https://winnovators-space.eu/> (D.3.1) was developed for teamwork and self-learning that considers engagement principles agreed in D.1.1. and integrates the gamified interaction functionalities (assessment with competence badges) described in 2.1. and D.4.1. The platform usage guidelines were described in (D.3.2).

iv) Pilots 1 and 2 across HEIs and communities engaging young rural women, students and mentors

In Estonia, Serbia and Slovenia the across HEIs and communities capacity building training were run in project years 2 and 3. The engagement of young women in vulnerable life situations in Estonia was through youth and community workers at municipalities. 2nd year youth work students were involved through a course with the aim of preparing students for project work as part of the daily activities of a youth worker, to find and use funding for youth projects and to support young people in the

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implementation of projects. HEI youth work students are also working in local rural youth centres, and they reached out to potential participants. Specific tasks of HEI students were connected with problem-based, collaborative and situated learning that took place through challenge modules in WINnovators Space. Teams were created. In the case developed in Serbia, the regional ecosystem was supported by interactions between the partners: HEI teachers (Mentors) – young rural women (WINnovators), HEI students (Change Agents), the Association of Business Women Serbia (ABWS) as mentors. The pairs were formed from HEI students and young women to work in teams in WINnovator Space. The mentors from different universities run regular online meetings to meet the students and young women to facilitate their learning process. In Slovenia, the public administrative organisations - the Employment Service and the Chamber of Commerce and Agriculture of Slovenia were engaged to reach out young rural women. HEI teachers recruited upper year students from the Faculty of Education to participate in the project by introducing the project, its aims and objectives, and inviting them to participate. The pilots were evaluated qualitatively from the point of view of capacity building and competence development, quantitative competence development data were observed with Winnovators Working Space and the surveys evaluated the experiences (D.4.1).

v) eTraining for educational policy makers to sustain the project results in different countries', the online international workshops and the national multipliers

eTraining was conducted separately in different partner countries for engaging local policymakers and educators into understanding best practices and discussing the policies. The international workshop for different stakeholders to discuss the project best practices, and the international online policy workshop engaging educational policy makers to discuss the results were conducted that resulted in policy guidelines (D. 4.2). In all the partner countries the national multiplier events conducted for sharing the project best practices.

Results: *What were the concrete outputs and other results of your project?*

PR1. The project co-developed capacity building engagement practices across HEIs, communities and OIEs (D.1.1), and two modular e-learning modules (D1.2) (Module 1 is targeting HEI students and young rural women competences for sustainable digital and STEM/STEAM entrepreneurship “STEM/STEAM entrepreneurship communities for young women”; Module 2 “Joint capacity building for sustainable futures” is for implementing Winnovators capacity building practices among educators and policymakers), implemented these into WINnovator Space (D.3.1) for remote interaction across HEIs and rural community learners, and tested the capacity building out during WINnovators Pilots (D.4.1).

PR2. The project initiated and transformed the careers of under-represented and marginalized 133 young women in Estonia, Serbia and Slovenia towards sustainable digital and STEM/STEAM entrepreneurship. The project carried out in Winnovator Space and by using other digital engagement approaches the elearning activities with 133 young rural women, 105 HEI students, 10 mentors and HEI educators from Estonia, Serbia and Slovenia, thus building a unique across HEIs and communities transformative Project **WINNOVATORS**

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learning situation that facilitated their joint transformation into change agents in the communities (D.4.1).

PR3. The project built the Winnovators Space elearning platform which enables self-learning and supports portfolio-based formal-informal learners' teamwork on their projects (D.3.1) and incorporates gamified learning badges support for motivation (D.2.1) and validated the pros and cons of gamified open badges approach on remote elearning situations across HEIs and the individual young women learners in rural communities (D.4.1). We presented a research article at INTED2024 about gamified interaction results in Winnovator space.

PR4. The project trained in Module 2 "Joint capacity building for sustainable futures" 83 educational policymakers from Estonia, Serbia, Slovenia, Italy and Romania about the successes of the Winnovator capacity building approaches and engaged them into developing the policies that are needed in education to implement educational capacity building across HEI borders (D 4.2).

We wrote several research articles to introduce the Pilot experiences and presented them at international conferences.

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